

Message Text

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SUBJ: LABOR/NATIONALIST AGREEMENT TO CONTROL
INCREASING POLITICAL VIOLENCE

1. THERE HAS BEEN A GROWING WAVE OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN MALTA OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS. IT HAS BECOME ALMOST STANDARD FOR PUBLIC MEETINGS OF THE LABOR AND NATIONALIST PARTIES (USUALLY HELD ON SUNDAYS IN THE VARIOUS CITIES AND VILLAGES) TO BE DISRUPTED BY THE THROWING OF ROCKS, BOTTLES, AND OTHER OBJECTS AND BY FIGHTING, LEADING TO DELIBERATE ATTACKS ON AUTOMOBILES, HOMES, AND PARTY CLUBHOUSES IN THE VICINITY OF THE MEETINGS.

2. PUBLIC POLITICAL MEETINGS IN MALTA ARE HELD WITH POLICE PERMISSION. WHAT WOULD APPEAR TO BE AN ADEQUATE NUMBER OF POLICEMEN ARE USUALLY IN ATTENDANCE TO CONTROL DISTURBANCES. DESPITE THIS, HOOLIGANS AMONG BOTH LABOR AND NATIONALIST SUPPORTERS ARE BECOMING MORE AND MORE ACTIVE. THUS FAR, THE

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POLICE HAVE FAILED TO CONTROL THEM, AND MEETINGS

FREQUENTLY END IN CHAOS. NATIONALIST PARTY LEADERS HAVE CHARGED THAT LABOR AGITATORS ARE SUBJECT TO INADEQUATE POLICE CONTROL, WHILE NATIONALIST TROUBLEMAKERS ARE MORE QUICKLY RESTRAINED.

3. THE MOST SERIOUS INCIDENT TO DATE OCCURRED ON SUNDAY JUNE 8, WHEN A NATIONALIST MEETING IN KALKARA (IN A STRONG LABOR DISTRICT NEAR THE DRYDOCKS) WAS VIOLENTLY DISRUPTED BY LABOR PARTISANS AND A NUMBER OF PERSONS INJURED.

4. AS A RESULT, THE NATIONALIST SHADOW CABINET REQUESTED AN URGENT MEETING WITH THE LABOR GOVERNMENT TO SEEK WAYS AND MEANS OF PREVENTING FUTURE INCIDENTS. THE REGULARLY SCHEDULED SESSION OF PARLIAMENT WAS SUSPENDED ON MONDAY JUNE 9 SO THAT THIS MEETING COULD BE HELD.

5. PRIME MINISTER MINTOFF SUBSEQUENTLY ANNOUNCED IN PARLIAMENT THAT BOTH SIDES (I.E., THE LABOR AND NATIONALIST PARTY EXECUTIVES) WERE EQUALLY CONCERNED ABOUT PAST INCIDENTS AND HAD AGREED TO TAKE "CERTAIN INTERNAL STEPS" TO PREVENT VIOLENCE IN THE FUTURE. OPPOSITION LEADER BORG OLIVIER CONFIRMED MINTOFF'S STATEMENT.

6. COMMENT: FOR THE MOMENT, THE SITUATION SEEMS TO HAVE CALMED DOWN. THE NATIONALISTS (WHO HAD BEEN MORE ON THE RECEIVING END THAN THE GIVING END IN RECENT MONTHS) WERE PRESSING FOR A PARLIAMENTARY SHOWDOWN ON THE ISSUE OF VIOLENCE AFTER THE KALKARA INCIDENT. HOWEVER, FOR HIS OWN REASONS, MINTOFF DECIDED, INSTEAD, TO TRY TO DEFUSE THE PROBLEM OFF STAGE. THE TEST OF EACH PARTY'S "INTERNAL" CONTROLS WILL NOT BE LONG IN COMING. MORE PUBLIC MEETINGS ARE SCHEDULED FOR THIS WEEKEND, AS PART OF A STEADY INCREASE IN POLITICAL ACTIVITY LOOKING TOWARD THE NEXT ELECTION. WIGGINS
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